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Baesler: ND English, Math Testing Going Smoothly

BISMARCK, N.D., March 23, 2016 – School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said Wednesday she is pleased about initial reports that this year's North Dakota State Assessment is going well for students.

School districts were allowed to begin testing March 15. They have until the end of their school year to test their students.

Perry Just, director of curriculum, instruction and assessment for the Mandan school district, said Mandan's schools began testing on the first day.

"We tested in four of our buildings on Day One and had only a few minor technical issues," Just said. "Also of note, we utilized a variety of devices in our buildings, such as iPads, iPad Minis, desktops and laptops, and had no issues with any of them."

Baesler said Wednesday that "some schools started testing last week, and more are coming online this week. I am cautiously optimistic that operations will continue to go smoothly for students and teachers. We will continue to devote significant time in our department to ensure things continue to go well."

This is the second year that the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is using this test for its English and mathematics assessments. Baesler and the department's assessment office have secured improvements to the system to ensure a more stable operation.

Anna Sell, principal of Oakes Elementary School, said Tuesday that 47 third graders in her school had been tested so far. "It is amazing how much smoother it is going this year," she said. "We have had no techno glitches."

Michael Gerszewski, systemic innovator for data assessment at Bismarck's public schools, said his district's testing "has gone quite well." Bryan Kriewald, technology coordinator for Valley City's public schools, said school officials were "pretty excited" about the assessment's progress so far. "Infinitely better than last year's start," he said.

Karen A. Moore, data and assessments manager for the Fargo school district, said Tuesday that about 350 students had completed their English tests so far. "We have found this year to be much better than last year," she said.

Teachers "are more comfortable with the process, and it seems to be more user friendly for them," Moore said. "I am thankful that the testing has been so smooth thus far, and it has certainly helped that the system continues to work without issues."

Greg Gallagher, director of assessments for the DPI, said about 4,600 students have been tested statewide so far. In all, more than 57,000 students are expected to take the State Assessment this year. Almost all of the exams are being given online, although districts have the option of using tests that students complete with paper and pencil.

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